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C O N F I D E N T I A L ISTANBUL 000610

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/06/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH POLICE SEIZE 4.4 TONS OF MORPHINE BASE

Classified By: Consul General David L. Arnett for reasons 1.4 (b) and (

d).

1. (C) Summary: Turkish National Police (TNP) seized 4.4 tons of morphine base, with an estimated value in Turkey of USD 15.5 million, in a raid on an Istanbul warehouse on March 29. The group targeted in the recent raid has connections to other narcotics trafficking groups in Turkey and elsewhere. TNP continue to investigate, and may yet succeed in further dismantling this network. End Summary.

2. (C) In early 2004, the Turkish National Police (TNP) received information indicating the possible presence of a multi-ton quantity of morphine base being stored in Istanbul. Acting on intelligence, TNP officers raided a warehouse in an industrial park located in Istanbul on March 29. Inside the warehouse was a truck which contained 4.4 tons of morphine base. The morphine was produced in Afghanistan during the period of Taliban rule, and may have been trafficked to Turkey through Iran. The intended wholesale point of sale was most likely Western Europe. The unprocessed morphine base has a value in Turkey of approximately USD 15.5 million. If processed, the morphine has a wholesale value of USD 50-60 million.

3. (C) Prior to the raid, TNP had set up long-term surveillance of the group operating the warehouse, with the goal of determining how many people were connected to the trafficked morphine. Five Turkish nationals were arrested as a result. All five are native-born residents of Istanbul, with three from the same family.

4. (C) Information on the raid was released to the press on March 31. Press have reported a linkage between this trafficking group and Cetinkaya, who was previously linked in the press to numerous large heroin seizures. Post assesses that this linkage seems accurate.

5. (C) DEA Istanbul reports that in subsequent conversation with TNP officials, the TNP have indicated that they are now targeting organizations, and not just trying to seize illicit drugs. TNP has indicated that they are now placing greater resources into follow-up on successful operations, seeking to identify the larger network facilitating drug trafficking.

6. (C) COMMENT: This latest seizure, coupled with that of over a ton of heroin earlier this year, illustrates the initial success of the TNP's new strategy. Officials realize, however, that these early successes have just begun to scratch the surface of this city's and country's trafficking problem. END COMMENT.  
ARNETT